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1864

"CHASTENED, BUT NOT KILLED."

A DISCOURSE

BY HENRY DARLING, D. D.

"Chastened, but not Killed."

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THE

DAY OF THE NATIONAL FAST,

AUGUST 4TH, 1864.

IN THE

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALBANY,

BY HENRY DARLING, D. D.,
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

ALBANY:
VAN BENTHUYSEN'S STEAM PRINTING HOUSE.
1864.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

ALBANY, *August* 8, 1864.

Rev. H. DARLING, D. D.:

Dear Sir—Having listened to your Discourse delivered on the occasion of the National Fast with much pleasure, and having heard a general desire expressed that it should be published, we hereby respectfully request a copy for that purpose.

OTIS ALLEN,	S. M. KISSICK,
J. O. COLE,	ABRM. KIRK,
DEODATUS WRIGHT,	SAMUEL ANABLE,
B. P. JOHNSON,	JOHN C. WARD,
S. HALE,	S. N. BACON,
WILLIAM WHITE,	JOHN DOUGLASS,
Z. BELKNAP,	WM. H. ROSS,
JAS. C. CROCKER,	H. S. McCALL.

ALBANY, *August* 13, 1864.

To OTIS ALLEN, ESQ., JOHN O. COLE, ESQ., JUDGE WRIGHT, and others:

Gentlemen—The Discourse you so kindly request for publication, has already in its *general* outline of thought, and in much of its language, been given to the public. It will be found in an Article, written by myself, and printed in the Presbyterian Quarterly Review for October, 1862. This fact has strongly inclined me to decline your request; and would have constrained me to do so, had not you, and others who listened to its delivery, expressed a *very earnest* desire for its publication.

In consenting to its appearance in this form, I should add, that I am influenced by the fact that in its original publication, it is entirely inaccessible to the great majority of those who now desire its reading and circulation; and, also, that many points of interest and importance have been added, while others are omitted.

Should its publication serve, in the *smallest degree*, to promote the interests of truth in our beloved country, I shall be thankful.

Most truly, your friend,

HENRY DARLING.

"Who murmurs that in these dark days
His lot is cast?
God's hand within the *shadow* lays
The stones whereon His gates of praise
Shall rise at last.
Turn and o'erturn, O outstretched Hand!
Nor stint, nor stay;
The years have never dropped their sand
On mortal issue vast and grand
As ours to-day."

SERMON.

PSALMS 3, 5, AND 6.

"I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about."

THE titles prefixed to the Psalms, though not divinely inspired, may still be regarded as presenting a truthful account of the peculiar circumstances in the life of their respective authors that led to their composition. They are found in all the old Hebrew manuscripts, and were so highly esteemed by the Jews, that they called the few which are destitute of them—thirty-three in all—"Orphan Psalms." To the one from which my text is taken this morning, the title prefixed is, "A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son." A brief reference to that incident in the life of the Psalmist is therefore essential to its right understanding.

There was a rebellion in Israel. A man nourished at the king's table, and himself a scion of royalty, sought to dethrone David, and to take the government into his own hands. And to this end, the most unjust accusations were brought against

the king. Taking a conspicuous position at the gate of Jerusalem, when "any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, Absalom said unto him, See thy matters are good and right, but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Oh, that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" And to this base falsehood was added the blandishments of an assumed friendship. "And it was so that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him and kissed him."

In time, to the most gigantic proportions did the rebellion grow. Treason found its way into the very palace of David. Some of the king's counsellors became his deceivers, and went over to the enemy. Crowds from every portion of Judea flocked to the standard of the usurper. "The people increased continually," is the sacred record with Absalom. And a trusty messenger, sent out by David to ascertain the popular feeling, upon his return reported that "the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." Indeed, to such an extent did the rebellion finally go, that nothing remained for David to do but ignominiously to fly from Jerusalem with the ark of God,

and the comparatively few who might still adhere to his standard.

And what a sad spectacle was that flight! We cannot read the inspired words that record it without the profoundest emotions. And David said unto his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise and let us flee, for we shall not else escape from Absalom; make speed and depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword." * * * "And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up."

The first place at which the fugitive king and his company stopped was Bahurim, a small village just beyond the Mount of Olives, and which seems to have been reached upon the evening of the same day that he left the capital. And it was there—at Bahurim—upon the morning following that David indited, and doubtless sang with his harp, this Psalm.*

And how remarkable the faith in God, that it

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* Bonar on the Psalms, page 10.

exhibits! Men in trouble are not wont to lie down in quiet sleep. Great fear makes that serene repose, in which all the senses are locked in unconscious slumber, almost an impossibility. It is when men are calm, and free from the perturbations of alarm, that they are able to give themselves to sleep. Yet precisely this was the condition of David. Though a fugitive from his throne, and the capital of his kingdom, and almost deserted by those who should have been his friends and protectors, yet so full of faith in God was the Psalmist, as to be able to say: "I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about."

Surely, it is not strange, that when the waves of sorrow and calamity have appeared to be ready to swallow up the Church, that Christians have so often gone to this Psalm to strengthen their faltering hope. Jonah did this in his living entombment. A part of his prayer to God, when in that perilous position in the deep, was a quotation from this Psalm.* Like that which Luther used to sing in his time of trouble—the forty-sixth

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* Jonah ii. 9.

Psalm—this has, in all ages, been the song of God's people in trial.

But before proceeding to notice the faith in God that David possessed in the midst of a great national calamity, let it be carefully observed that his faith was not *without works*. When so sorely pressed by Absalom as to be constrained in the most pitiful manner to flee, David did not calmly resign himself to sleep, trusting that God, irrespective of his own exertions, would deliver him from his enemies. The king was too well acquainted with the mode of the divine procedure in such circumstances to be guilty of such folly. His faith that God would certainly deliver him from all his foes *came after* he had to this end, himself employed every instrumentality in his power, and without this, he could never have cherished so unwavering a confidence. That quiet sleep of the king at Bahurim, so beautifully expressive of his faith, was preceded by the formation of the wisest plans for his defence, and by their most vigorous prosecution.

Thus, to defeat in the cabinet of Absalom the artful counsel of Ahithophel, David sent thither his trusty friend Hushai, the Archite; and that he might have those with him who would faithfully transmit important intelligence to the king, Zadok

and Abiathar, the priests, were, with the ark of God, sent back to Jerusalem. David employed the most wily *strategy* against his enemies. He sent spies into their camp; and, doubtless, at the same time summoned every loyal friend of the government immediately to flock to his standard; for very soon after this we find him employed in the organization of a mighty army, "numbering the people and setting captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them."

And need I say that this is always essential to the exercise of a true faith? In a time of personal or national trouble, to cherish a confidence that God will help us, *so long as we fail to help ourselves*, is the most arrogant presumption. For any man, or for any nation, when environed with danger, to sit down and with folded arms, sing, "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," is little else than blasphemy. That song of sweet and confiding faith in God, can only be rightfully sung by those who have first sought themselves to work out from the danger, their own salvation.

But I must hasten to notice the faith of David, in this great rebellion of Absalom against his throne and government, a faith that was so strong as to lift him above all unfavorable outward ap-

pearances, and to give him such unwavering confidence in the final result as upon the very morning after his exile to say, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about."

And, doubtless, one reason for this faith—one ground upon which it stood—was David's deep and profound conviction of the *unrighteousness* and *wickedness* of the rebellion.

David was not the man to arrogate to himself perfection, or to deny, in many particulars, his own personal or official shortcomings. But just as with every man who will frankly confess his real faults, David was, for that very reason, all the more incensed when falsely accused. And well did he know that such was the character of the accusations that Absalom brought against him. *He had never perverted judgment in Judea.* It was a base slander of his government to affirm it.

With what intense loathing, also, must the whole, honest, and manly nature of David have regarded the *means* employed by Absalom to promote revolt! A friendship, extended so far as to lead him to take into his royal arms, and to favor with a royal kiss every man that approached him, but which was all hollow-hearted and assumed,

how could that man, who, in character, was after God's own heart, have looked upon such an act with any other feelings than those of righteous indignation?

There was, in a word, no *true ground* for the rebellion of Absalom. It sought to overthrow a government for the redress of no real wrong. It was a matter of personal ambition. It was a single man who was seeking for himself a place of power, and who would revolutionize an empire that he might gain it. And will God prosper such an enterprise? Will He suffer a permanent victory to be achieved by any one in so unholy a cause? Will He give the sanction of success to this false accusation that Absalom brought against the government of David, and to those dissimulations which he practiced to secure popular favor? The Psalmist could not believe that such an issue was possible. The God of justice was still upon the throne, and although in His sovereignty, and for the accomplishment of His wise purposes, He might grant to this rebellion a *momentary* triumph, yet, in the *end*, David was certain that it would be destroyed. The very character of God was pledged to such a result.

By this remark I do not, of course, mean to say that every unrighteous and wicked rebellion will

certainly be crushed. That success is the infallible rule of right, would be, in the politics of this world, a very dangerous principle to introduce. Yet the fact that any cause is wrong, has been conceived in falsehood, and promoted by deceit, is that not *one* ground for the belief that it will be unsuccessful? Though virtue is militant here, and is sometimes overborne by vice, is she not usually victorious?

> "God's justice is a bed where we
> Our anxious hearts may lay,
> And weary with ourselves may sleep
> Our discontent away.
> For right is right since God is God,
> And right the day must win;
> To doubt, would be disloyalty,
> To falter, would be sin."

But still another ground upon which David rested his faith in the ultimate triumph of his cause was the recollection of *past deliverances.*

Frequently before this had "his enemies compassed him about, and the assembly of the wicked enclosed him;" but always had he escaped from them! And now, as the remembrance of such experiences rushed upon his mind, it kindled in his bosom the hope that the Lord would help him, and from every danger that threatened him find out a way of escape. To this, reference is

doubtless had in the seventh verse of this Psalm: "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly."

David remembered how, when a poor shepherd boy a lion and a bear attacking his flock and threatening to devour them, the Lord delivered them into his hands. He recalled that time when, in the providence of God, confronting that giant of Gath, Goliath, his little sling and a few smooth stones from a brook, stretched the Philistine champion a corpse at his feet. He thought of the javelins that Saul had hurled against him, but that passing by him, had smote harmless into the palace walls; of that critical period in his life, when the hosts of his enemies, surrounding his house, Michal, his then faithful wife, let him down through a window so that he escaped; and of those many days of wandering in the strongholds of Ziph and Maon, where, though hunted by Saul, in his own language, "like a partridge upon the mountains," yet the Lord delivered him not into his hands. And now He who has thus protected and guarded me all my life long, and who has thus brought me out safely from so many dangers, will He—thought David—desert me? Delivered by the almighty power of God from the lion

and the bear, from the might of Philistia's champion, and from the rage of the infuriated Saul, will I now fall in this unjust and wicked rebellion of Absalom? The past mercies of God to David were to him the ground of his present confidence. He could not believe that, after Jehovah had thus cared for him, and had thus succoured him in so many hours of danger, He would now leave him to die ignominiously by the hands of his own son.

And in thus making the remembrance of *past* deliverances *one* ground for *present* hope, was not David right?

Manoah, the father of Samson, because he had seen an angel and conversed with him, so far yielded to the popular belief of his day, as to suppose that he would certainly die. But much wiser than Manoah, was his wife's interpretation of this event. From God's kindness to them, as exhibited in receiving their acts of worship, she confidently inferred His purpose of love toward them. "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would, as, at this time, have told us such things as these." In a word, there is something in the immutability of

the divine character, in the changelessness of His purposes and of His love, both to individuals and nations, that gives us good ground for regarding the experience of past deliverances, as the pledge for present succour.

But the faith of David in this hour of his nation's extremity, had, I am quite sure, a firmer ground upon which to rest, than either his deep conviction of the unrighteousness and wickedness of this rebellion, or his remembrance of past deliverances. David had a truthful—perhaps inspired—conception of the *divine mission*, that, in the great purposes and plans of God toward our race, *his* nation was to perform.

The Psalmist was not the man to be blind to the sins of his people. He had too keen a vision of iniquity to permit it anywhere to exist, unobserved. And that the Jews were a wicked people, "a people laden with iniquity, the seed of evil-doers," David well knew. He saw how sadly they, as a nation, had departed from God, and how they had forgotten Him who had "brought them as a vine out of Egypt, and planting them in the goodly land of Canaan, had caused them in their fruitfulness to send out their boughs unto the sea, and their branches unto the river." There was no self-righteousness with David, whether it

was to himself or to his nation, that his vision was directed.

But notwithstanding all this unrighteousness and sin, the Psalmist well knew how vastly superior in good-order, liberty, virtue, and religion, his nation was to all the other people of the earth. Already, by their goodly example, had the Jews been a blessing to the world; and as a nation just entering upon their existence, how natural to suppose that their career of beneficence had just commenced. That free government which they had received from God himself, and those sublime revelations of immortal truth which had been made to them, were these to be forever lost? Was the darkness of that bondage in Egypt again to envelope the world? The purposes of God, in their wonderful exode, and in their still more wonderful journey in the wilderness, when,

> For them the rocks dissolved into a flood,
> The dews condensed into angelic food,
> Their very garments, sacred old, yet new,
> And time forbid to touch them as he flew,

were these already accomplished? David could not believe it possible.

That God designed by this affliction to purify His people, and out of this terrible furnace of fire to bring them with all the dross of their sin con-

sumed, the Psalmist could well understand. This, he knew, was just what Jehovah always does for the individual or the nation that He loves. But the destruction of Israel, or in other words, the ultimate success of this rebellion of Absalom, David could not for one moment believe. In his palace, and especially in that "chamber over the gate"—David's place for private prayer—he had had many a bright vision of the future glory of his country. He had seen her going on in a race of unparalleled prosperity, scattering everywhere through this dark world the blessings of a true liberty and of a pure religion. And now, in this career, is she to be suddenly arrested? It was not thus that David read the designs of God toward his people. Their present affliction he believed to be but for their holy discipline, and though long extended, yet finally the great end secured, David had not a doubt but that Israel would go, on and on, fulfilling for many generations yet to come, her divine mission of benevolence to the world. And it was this assurance that made the Psalmist so calm and peaceful, in the midst of all the sad and perilous circumstances that surrounded him, and enabled him at Bahurim, upon the very morning after his flight from Jerusalem to sing. "I laid me down and

slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about."

The application of these remarks to the peculiar circumstances in which as a nation we are now placed, is to every mind perfectly obvious. Indeed there is scarcely a single point in which the parallel is not perfect. This war is the *rebellion* of a *son against* his parent. It is Absalom against David. And at first too, comparatively weak, it has, at last, grown into the most gigantic proportion. Indeed, truth constrains us to confess that *David is, sometimes fugitive before Absalom*, and *loyalty is, with us sitting down, as did of old that man of God, at a second Bahurim.*

And doubtless the first duty of this nation, is, to act just as David did in like circumstances; to evoke for this struggle every element of its strength. To talk in these perilous times of trusting in God for our deliverance, so long as we remain as a nation in supineness and sloth, may have a pious sound to some ears, but really, it is all cant, aye, more, it is the most arrogant presumption. True, all real causality is with God, and without Him we can do nothing, but is it not always through the instrumentality of second causes that Jehovah employs His efficiency? It

would be no more vain for a sinner to sit down in spiritual idleness, and expect that God would, irrespective of his own activities, interpose for his salvation, than for this nation to hope that Absalom would be defeated and slain, while yet David did not summon to his aid the armies of Israel. It is indeed well for us in these troublous times to remember that our help is in God, and even to sing that sweet song of confiding faith, "The Lord is our refuge and strength," but neither the feeling, or the song have any meaning, unless at the same time we summon to the struggle every resource of power and influence that we possess.

Here, then, is unquestionably our first duty, and let no one seek in any way to evade it. The question, what can I personally do to assist the government under which I live to crush this rebellion, is one that every man should now diligently propose to himself; and by the reply that his own conscience gives to this interrogation, should all his conduct be governed. This is no time for hesitation or delay, for carping criticism, or for that inquiry that self-interest is so prone to make; how is this or that going to affect *me?* "the politician with a sharp eye to the future position of his party, the merchant to his con-

tracts, the money holder to his property, the military officer to his chances of preferment, and the private citizen to his comforts." We are unworthy sons of noble sires; we are the ungrateful recipients of divine blessings, if, as when now, everything truly valuable in this country is imperiled, we hesitate at any sacrifice of either time, or property, or life, that duty calls upon us to make.

Our country, the mother on whose lap we have all been nourished, and from whom we have all drawn our whole political life, wounded and bleeding from the blows that she has received from her own ungrateful and rebellious children, now turns to us to staunch her wounds, and to save her from an untimely death, and in the plaintive accents of mingled hope and despair, cries to each of her loyal sons "*Behold thy Mother!*" Shall the suppliant voice be unheeded? Owe we her no debt of gratitude which we should now pay? If to lay the foundations of this republic, our fathers did well to pour out both their blood and treasure, is the life and money of their children too precious to be given for its maintenance? Our present struggle is either all wrong, and every man who gives it the slightest encouragement is to be condemned, or it is right, and we are all together

bound at *whatever cost*, to carry it on to a triumphant conclusion.

But let us turn to the analogies of hope our theme suggests. Unfavorable as to all human appearances seemed the cause of David upon that night, that with his little band of faithful followers he rested at Bahurim; his confidence in God was still unshaken. "I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about."

And may we not cherish for ourselves, in this day of our national peril a like confidence? Had David a single ground for his faith in the success of his cause that we do not possess? Was that rebellion of Absalom any more unrighteous or wicked than that which is now deluging our country with blood?

It was a falsehood for Absalom to say that David perverted judgment in Judea; and it is equally false for any portion of this land to affirm that a single one of its constitutional rights were ever denied it. The great producing cause of both these rebellions was the lust of power. It was all ambition for place. Let the reins of this government have always remained in the hands that now seek its overthrow, and let them have been

permitted to drive it wheresoever they listed, and they would never have lifted one finger against it. And with a dissimulation that cannot fail to suggest, the obsequiousness of Absalom, in kissing every man in Judea that came to make obeisance to him; has this revolt in our land been promoted. The possession of power under the Federal government was largely used for its overthrow, and with loud professions of an earnest wish for compromises, secret efforts were made to secure their defeat.

Nor is this all. There is in this American rebellion one feature—in our apprehension supremely unrighteous and wicked—that had no place in the rebellion in Judea. We refer, of course, to the avowed purpose of conserving and perpetuating an institution, for clinging to which the hosts of Pharaoh were overwhelmed in the Red Sea; and over which all our fathers in olden times, both North and South, were wont to weep. And now a rebellion thus conceived and promoted, will God prosper it? A government with such a corner-stone—*a corner-stone laid in the falsehood that denies human equality, and personal liberty*—will it ever be established? *We cannot believe it.* As well think of Absalom's sitting down upon David's

throne and wearing David's purple, as such a possibility in this land.

And to this ground of the Psalmist's faith did he add the remembrance of past deliverances? Did David believe that God would bring him out safely from this danger, because from similar perils he had extricated him, *may we not do the same?*

It is not over a sea entirely undisturbed by the winds of party or sectional strife, that—previous to this great storm—our vessel of state has been moving for more than half a century. Generally, enjoying a calm, she has yet ever and anon, encountered a storm, in which many a less strongly built vessel would certainly have foundered. The despots of the old world have occasionally seen our political heavens darkened, and our ship of state careening, and apparently almost sinking before the rude blasts of political contention. Yet from all these storms, by the good hand of God upon her has she, at length, come out unharmed, and with sails filled with the soft breezes of peace and tranquility, has sped away joyfully on her course, with a nation's prayers, like guardian angels hovering round her track.

One of these seasons of political danger was immediately after our national independence had been achieved, and before the Federal Constitu-

tion had been framed and adopted. The condition of our country was then *most critical. The union* formed in the heat of the common struggle for freedom, *evaporated* in the very success of the energies that it had inspired. We had then no nationality, and in the endless clashing of sectional interests, good men feared we never could become *one nation.*

As the members of that memorable convention which framed our federal constitution, were on the last day of the session affixing their names to it, Benjamin Franklin, looking towards the President's chair, at the back of which a sun was painted, observed to those next to him, "I have often and often, in the course of the session, and the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears as to its issue, looked at that sun behind the President, without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting." And in a letter written about the same time, by Washington to Lafayette, we find the following emphatic declaration, "It appears to me little short of a miracle, that the delegates from so many States, different from each other, as you know, in their manners, circumstances, and prejudices, should unite in forming a system

of national government so little liable to well-founded objections."*

Another such season of national peril was consequent upon the declaration of war in 1812. To that measure, in some parts of the Union, the opposition was most violent. Strenuous exertions were made to embarrass the revenue. In some of our sea-ports the flags of the shipping were hoisted at half-mast, in token of mourning. The Governors of two States refused to furnish the required quota of soldiers, and finally a convention of several States was called to *inaugurate*, —so far as its real design has ever been divulged, —*Secession*.

Still another perilous season in our political history, was, when in 1820, it was proposed to admit Missouri, as a slaveholding State in the Union. I cannot stop to sketch that epoch. Some of my hearers remember it well, and know that Cassandras were not wanting then to predict the downfall of Troy, nor Edomites in their rage against this modern Jerusalem, to cry, "Raze it, raze, even to the foundations thereof." But in all these storms God was with us as a nation, and for the precious ark of our liberties prepared *an Ararat*.

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* Irving's Washington, vol. 4, p. 459.

And will he not do so now? Will He who in the past has "led us, instructed us, and kept us as the apple of His eye," now withdraw from us His protection? It is in God's past mercies to this people that we find one ground for our hope of present deliverance. Our feelings are perfectly identical with those of the Psalmist, and we are ready with him to exclaim, "Thou which hast showed me great and sore trouble, shalt quicken me again, and bring me again from the depths of the earth." "Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

But David had, as we have seen, a still firmer and surer ground for his confidence in the overthrow of Absalom's rebellion. Deeply conscious of the sins of his people, the Psalmist still believed that Israel had, under God, a great and divine mission of blessing to perform to the world, and hence that her present affliction could not be intended for her destruction, but was only disciplinary. And are we not right in cherishing precisely the same views of our land in her present sorrow?

Like Israel of old, we are, indeed, a *wicked people*. Our sins are many and aggravated, and they are continually crying to heaven against us. We are proud. We are ever saying to the nations

of the earth, in the swelling of our national vanity, "Behold this great Babylon which we have built." We are covetous, greedy of gain, practical materialists, ever pampering the body and starving the soul. We are a remarkably *intemperate* people. Drunkenness is a vice, perhaps more prevalent with us than with any other people in the world, either civilized or barbarous.

We are forgetful of that divine command "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." *In this very city*, without a single one of those flimsy pretenses growing out of a large population, which seem to some, in other localities, to justify such conduct; and for the single purpose of paying a larger dividend, the Lord's day is desecrated by the running of cars on our street railways. We are a wonderful extravagant people, and oftentimes in our determination to secure every comfort and even luxury, for ourselves, reverse that famous motto of Christians in olden times, "Nothing for self; everything for thee, O Lord." We have been guilty of the sin of oppression. We have held in unrighteous bondage millions of our fellow men, and what was more strange, if not more sinful, many have stoutly defended themselves in their guilt. Unlike our noble revolutionary fathers, and those who followed them in the first

quarter of a century of our existence as an independent people, and who, whether in politics, Federalists or Democrats, or by birth and residence, Northerners or Southerners, *all* united in pronouncing American slavery to be *both a political* and moral evil; *many*, now that it has become a question of political moment, and pecuniary interest, apologize for it; and some, alas, even of the ministers of Christ, essay to defend it from the pages of the sacred oracles themselves. And to complete the catalogue of our iniquities, we should doubtless add many other things equally displeasing to God.

But after saying all this, and everything else that can, in this direction, be said, we still cannot feel that, for our iniquities, God has, in this rebellion, come out upon us in His wrath, and that He is about to consign us, as a nation, to remediless destruction. We, indeed, recognize our national sins, and the connection that exists between them and our present sorrow; but the connection is not, we believe, one of judgment and retribution, but of discipline and purification. The passage of Holy Writ that we think most aptly applies to this nation, is not those words of the old prophet of doom: "Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon this sinful kingdom, and I will

destroy it from off the face of the earth;" but rather those sweet words of comfort that Christ spake to His own people: "Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Our reading of the purpose of God toward this people, in this terrible rebellion, is all summed up in the words—"*Chastened, but not killed.*" "*Chastened, but not killed.*"

But alas, is this process of moral purification yet completed?

We acknowledge with gladness, to-day, the fact that *something* has in this direction been accomplished. A document, recognizing so directly as the one appointing this day, as a day of humiliation and prayer, the great doctrines of God's sovereignty and universal Providence, and above all, the indissoluble connection between national sins and national judgments, never before emanated either from the legislative, or executive department of our government. Heretofore also, with no acknowledgment of God in our coinage, we hail with delight the fact that we have now, at least one piece of money, bearing upon its face the inscription: "In God we trust." Thousands and tens of thousands, likewise, of those who were once enslaved, are now enjoying the blessings of freemen. Some are bearing arms in our defence, others are

tilling the ground for remunerative wages, and still others are in the way of securing for themselves the priceless blessings of education.

"Already on the sable ground
Of man's despair
Is *freedom's* glorious picture found.
With all its dusky hands unbound,
Upraised in prayer."

How sad that we cannot continue this catalogue, and that that "scourge of cords" with which our blessed Master has been for these three years chastening us, has not yet expelled from this temple of His habitation everything that defiled it. In those great national sins of pride, covetousness, extravagance, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, we can see but little abatement. Indeed we fear sometimes, that these evils have *waxed* rather than *waned* in these days of our national trouble. And then as to that great sin, that was *beyond all question* the cause of this war, and that the Providence of God, so clearly indicates, is, through its instrumentality, to be entirely removed from our land; is there no guilty drawing back on our part, fearing that the price of universal freedom is too dear for us to pay?

Hear me candidly on this point for a moment, for I do not, in this sacred place, utter the Shib-

boleth of any party, but speak only the language of Canaan.

In everything that *man* has done to promote universal freedom in this land, are you faithless? Do you *honestly* disapprove of all those measures, which have to this end been adopted, by our constituted authorities? *Let it be so.* It is not the proper province of the pulpit, either to attack or defend the particular policy of any administration. No minister of the Lord Jesus Christ should be a partisan. But are you faithless and unbelieving as to what *God* has done? Is not this war an *enigma* that no man can solve—a perfectly *inexplicable* problem—a *chaos* of intermingling and *conflicting* occurrences, without polarity, harmony, or design—if it was not intended by an all-wise Providence to eventuate in universal freedom? Recognizing this single fact, as the *great* purpose of God in this war, have we not at once a *key* to all its seeming contradictions?

I listen, and the bells of Liberty are now circling the earth with their sweet chiming. Serfdom in Russia lives only in history. Since the first clash of arms in this land, every yoke of bondage, in that mighty empire, which we have been wont to regard as a despotism more compact and cold than her own hills of ice, has been

broken. Austria, until quite recently, the very embodiment of tyranny, has now proclaimed to religious faith, universal toleration. Italy has been rescued from her stagnant degradation, and is now moving on with rapid strides, in the way of an active and free self-development. Holland has just emancipated, in Surinam, 46,000 slaves, in a population of but 61,000; and even the emperor of Brazil has intimated to the foreign ambassadors, resident at his court, a purpose immediately to inaugurate in his realm some scheme of emancipation.

And, oh ! is all the world to go free, and America only to be a land of bondage ? Is there no lesson of instruction in these *proclamations* of freedom, that come to us from across the seas ? Rocked to our very centre by this great social convulsion, was it not all to the very intent, that over our mountains and valleys, and along the shores of our rivers and seas, that same *bell of liberty now ringing in the old world might chime out its sweet notes ?*

And just here do we not see, the *true* reason why the victory tarries ; and also the peculiar appropriateness of the observance of such a day as this ? The work of moral purification is not yet completed. We have not yet given up those sins on account of which God has sent upon us

these judgments. And possibly, before we are brought to this point, God may need to hold us in the furnace for many more weary months, or even years.

Physical defeats may be necessary, to secure moral victories, in the *future*, as they have been in the *past*. Clinging very firmly to our sins, we may have to be brought still lower in the valley of humility, before we will forsake them. "The plough-share of affliction may have to make a deeper furrow, to reach the hard subsoil of our self-devotion." Our material wealth as a nation may need to be greatly reduced, before a generous patriotism will supplant selfishness and party-spirit. But finally, the process ended, and the nation purged of those great sins which have so long polluted her fair fame, liberty and the blessings of brotherhood, secured to all who wear the form and possess the attributes of man, we doubt not but *that the darts of some modern Joab will be thrust through the heart of this Absalom, and the trumpet of David be heard, calling back to their homes our pursuing hosts.*

And oh, amidst all the darkness of this night of gloom, is it not sweet to think of that coming day of glory; aye, more, to see, even now, breaking over the distant hill-tops, its first bright

morning beams? This beautiful land, physically, "the glory of all lands," with its Northern mountains, and Western prairies, and Southern savannahs: and, intellectually, the home of a race, whose character, formed by the commingling of almost all European nationalities, is like, Corinthian brass, for that very reason the more precious: such a land, emerging from this terrible baptism of blood, purified from all the dross of sin, and thus starting out upon a new career of blessing; will not that be a spectacle that angels will delight to behold? May God hasten it, in our time, and all the praise shall be His forever and ever. Amen.

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